To the Graduate Program:
This project, entitled "Strategies and Techniques for New Adult Language Instructors at Resettlement Agencies" and written by Ellie Yearns, is presented to the Graduate
Program of Greensboro College. I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts with a Major in Teaching English to
Speakers of Other Languages.

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STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES FOR NEW ADULT LANGUAGE INSTRUCTORS AT RESETTLEMENT AGENCIES

Presented to the Graduate Program of Greensboro College

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in
Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

by Ellie Yearns

December 2019

Advisor: Professor Wilder

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Abstract

Employees and volunteers that teach English to newly arrived adult refugees at resettlement agencies fill an important role in the United States immigration process. However, these instructor positions frequently offer low wages, a lack of job security, underfunded programs and a lack of professional development. Many instructors have never been trained in teaching English as a second language. This thesis details an inservice training session for newly hired teachers who have little to no previous teaching experience. The workshop offers strategies and techniques to prepare teachers to teach English in an efficient and engaging way that also aims to give adults agency over their own path.

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Chapter One: Introduction

According to Pew Research (2019), the United States has admitted roughly 76,000 refugees since the current administration took office in January 2017. Though this signifies a sharp decline compared to the previous administration, the statistics still represent a significant number of newcomers. To handle the influx of new residents the government contracts with resettlement agencies to provide basic needs for newly arrived refugees, such as literary instruction, work training, and housing. The period for helping newcomers learn the culture and the language and find a job is three months. For many, more time and support is needed for them to feel like true, confident members of their community (Baxter, 2018). This short timeline is incredibly difficult for many of the refugees as well as for the resettlement agencies. These agencies, such as Church World Service, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, and International Rescue Committee, are nonprofits run on a small budget and financially impacted by the ebbs and flows of annual refugee admissions.

Often staffed in part by AmeriCorps workers and volunteers, instructors at resettlement agencies usually have little to no teaching experience related to TESOL or knowledge of other aspects of teaching in general. Volunteers who are willing to teach in poor working conditions for nominal pay fill an important role in the English teaching system because many immigrants and refugees are often the poorest members of their societies and the least able to afford pricey English language professionals (Henrichsen, 2010). However, research has shown that teachers in resettlement agencies often face

many obstacles including underfunded programs, low salaries, lack of training, lack of job security, loneliness, and continuous student intake (Haque, Cray, Ramanathan, and Morgan, 2007). Furthermore, there is not a coherent or consistent set of national standards to guarantee quality in what is taught or how the volunteers teach.

Policies that aim to assimilate newcomers as soon as possible provide very few of the skills, resources, and connections that refugees need to become active, contributing members of the community (Warriner, 2007). Emphasis on job preparation and high school completion, together with the use of English as the only language of instruction at all levels, creates a situation in which short term goals are prioritized at the expense of helping students achieve authentic language learning, true economic self-sufficiency, and social mobility.

Resettlement agency training may be too basic to move immigrants beyond manual jobs (Han, 2009). Newcomers are expected to obtain jobs to become self-sufficient, but the kind of jobs that students obtain typically provides wages that are far below what is needed to be economically independent. The English language proficiency of newcomers does not always translate into economic self-sufficiency or social mobility even though, according to Warriner (2007), proficiency in English is considered one of the key components of membership and often equated with patriotism, national identity, and a rightful place in society.

Adults are often portrayed as or treated like children or find themselves in childlike positions (Jung, 2013). At resettlement agencies refugees are referred to as clients while at the same time telling them where they need to be, what they need to

learn, and how they need to work (Sowa, 2009). Time needs to be spent examining how refugees themselves define successful integration. Lastly, information communicated by organizational staff members is sometimes hindered by a lack of cultural sensitivity on the part of one of the nonprofit employees or volunteers (Steimel, 2016).

The Project

While the societal problems surrounding immigration in the United States are quite complex, creating in-service training to better prepare resettlement agency teachers is a step in the right direction. Therefore, my project is a weekend training course on how to teach English to adults for resettlement agency staff and volunteers. The workshop is modeled after training created by Newman, Samimy, and Romstedt (2010) and includes the following components:

- 1. The basics of second language acquisition.
- 2. Practical methods of teaching English to adult learners.
- 3. How to look for best practices and guide fellow teachers toward them.
- How culture influences the classroom, and how societal issues impact policy and programs.

Training instructors who teach in resettlement agencies is important for several reasons. First, it gives novice teachers tools they need to do their job and feel confident in their teaching abilities. Second, it helps newcomers learn English in a more efficient and engaging way. Third, if implemented correctly, the training gives adult learners agency

over their own path. Finally, it creates a set of standards to ensure consistency in methods that are used across the resettlement agency.

Immigrating to a new country will always be a stressful process. Resettlement agencies are performing a monumental task to ensure that newcomers arriving in the United States are not lost or alone. Training staff and volunteers to be effective language teachers will foster a learning-centered environment that benefits instructors and students.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

According to Batalova and Fix (2010), twenty-two million adults in the United States struggle with basic communication in English in the workplace, in their children's schools, and in their communities. Immigrants and their children are one group for which limited English proficiency and literacy skills represent a significant barrier to mobility. In this chapter, I review scholarly articles written about teaching English to adult refugees and immigrants. I begin with an explanation of how the United States government coordinates with resettlement agencies to place newly arrived refugees. I then provide details related to the challenges for the resettlement agencies, the instructors, and the adult learners. Next, I provide an overview of what culturally and linguistically diverse adult learners need in order to successfully learn English. I conclude with research about how to effectively train ESL teachers who are working with adult learners.

United States Immigration and Resettlement Agencies

The United States has admitted roughly 76,000 refugees since the current administration took office in January 2017 (Krogstad, 2019). To handle the influx of new residents, the government contracts with resettlement agencies to provide basic needs for newly arrived refugees, such as literacy instruction, work training, and housing (Duguay, 2012). The period during which these agencies help newcomers learn the culture and the language and find a job is three months (Sowa, 2009). For many refugees, more time and support is needed in order for them to enter into a state of integration and stability (Baxter, 2018).

Challenges for Resettlement Agencies

One challenge for resettlement agencies is that U.S. immigration policies and funding focus on security rather than integration (Duguay, 2012). This is in contrast to some other first-world countries, such as Canada, that spend much more on immigration integration programs than border security (Duguay, 2012). A second challenge with immigration policies that Sowa (2009) noted is the "emphasis on ethnocentric ideas of self-sufficiency, while simultaneously creating barriers to newcomers' empowerment" (p. 102). Sowa (2009) explained that the current system gives immigrants the bare minimum of training and support and then pushes them out on their own for fear that they might catch dependency syndrome. Thirdly, according to the Center for Immigration Studies, most resettlement agencies in the United States, such as Church World Service, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, and International Rescue Committee are nonprofits that operate with small budgets (Rush, 2018). These agencies are financially impacted by the ebbs and flows of annual refugee admissions (Rush, 2018).

Challenges for Adult Language Teachers

Researchers point out that adult language teachers experience many restraints, including isolation, lack of job security, lack of professional development, underfunded programs, continuous intake, and low wages (Haque, Cray, Ramanathan, & Morgan, 2007; Wachob & Williams, 2010). Teachers at resettlement agencies commonly have students at varying levels of ability in one class being taught the same material due to

time constraints, and often teach these classes in board rooms with nothing on the walls instead of classrooms with instructional materials displayed (Haque et al., 2007). Additionally, there is no set of national standards to guarantee quality in what is taught or how it is taught and thus, no stable framework for developing language teachers as specialists (Leung, 2002; Burns & Roberts, 2010).

Challenges for Adult Learners

Multiple scholars have noted that training by the resettlement agency and even English proficiency are frequently not enough to enable refugees to become self-sufficient (Han, 2009; Duguay, 2012). Warriner (2007) and Rymes (2002) noted that learning English does not always translate into social mobility even though fluency in English is considered one of the primary components of membership and often equated with patriotism, national identity, and a rightful place in society. According to Han (2009) resettlement agency training may be too basic to move immigrants beyond manual jobs. Policies that aim to assimilate newcomers as soon as possible provide very few of the skills, resources, and connections that refugees need to become active, contributing members of the community (Warriner, 2007). Additionally, Duguay (2012) explained that programming for newcomers does not target the unique needs of immigrants, but rather treats refugees as having the same needs as all citizens.

Additional challenges for adult refugees include the fact that they are not seen as whole people. There are often cultural misunderstandings, and there are differing mindsets based on whether refugees immigrated voluntarily or out of necessity (Miller,

2010; Jung, 2013; Steimel, 2016; McBrien, 2005). Miller (2010) and Jung (2013) found that adult immigrant language learners are frequently marginalized or treated like children in the dominant society. According to Steimel (2016), information communicated by resettlement agency employees is sometimes impeded by a lack of cultural competence on the part of one of the organizational workers. Finally, McBrien (2005) explained that adapting to a new culture is affected by whether the person immigrated voluntarily. Voluntary immigrants tend to be more open to learning the language and culture of a new country; however, refugees may be more likely to see integration as a form of disavowing the newcomers' home country (McBrien, 2005).

What Adult Learners Need to Successfully Learn English

Adult learners that have recently immigrated to a new country need to be shown respect and empathy in order to lower students' affective filters so that learning can take place. Recognizing and valuing adult learners' cultural differences is important to students' academic success (McBrien, 2005). Additionally, many adult refugees have survived trauma and thus are sensitive to physical classroom surroundings. Finn (2010) cautioned that rooms with few windows and tightly shut doors may make students feel a lack of control. Leaving the classroom door at least partly open and telling students where bathrooms and exit doors are located in the building can help to ameliorate the students' concerns (Finn, 2010). Once students feel less vulnerable, the focus can be placed on learning.

A crucial strategy for adult language learners is to engage students in speaking roles. Han (2009) argued that allowing newcomers a legitimate speaking position in activities meaningful to the students has the power to construct a positive identity that "can bring about social, economic, and linguistic effects" (p. 662). Han (2009) went on to explain that speaking roles allow people to be recognized and accepted as competent. Roberts and Cooke (2009) expanded this theory and suggested that "developing an authentic voice" (p. 639) in English helps migrants regain a sense of agency that may have been threatened during the migration process. Curran and Stelluto (2005) contended that the best place for students to practice speaking English is by entering new speech communities outside the classroom. "Opportunities for Adult ESOL Learners to Revision and Envision Their Social Identities," (Curran & Stelluto, 2005) reasoned that most immigrants socialize mainly in one insular community and thus do not have enough opportunities to participate in extended English conversations.

The authors suggested multiple ways to structure courses and lessons to maximize the benefit for adult learners (Hodara, 2015; Johnson & Parrish, 2010; Van Rensburg & Son, 2010). For example, Van Rensburg and Son (2010) incorporated technology into an adult refugee program and received a positive response from the students. The internet provides authentic material which can be used to improve students' language learning and computer literacy skills at the same time (Van Rensburg & Son, 2010). Hodara (2015) advocated for teaching developmental courses in quick succession in order to keep adult students engaged and moving forward. Accelerated classes are superior to long courses that are often hard for students to complete (Hodara, 2015). Johnson and Parrish

(2010) explained that for adult learners who want to go on to college, an increased emphasis should be placed on learning higher-order academic skills, such as critical thinking, technology, note-taking, and presentation skills. This shows the importance of knowing the goals of adult learners so that lessons can be structured to achieve students' aims.

How to Train Adult ESL Teachers

Having language instructors who are trained and capable to teach adult refugees is important. Baxter (2018) described how staff and volunteers in resettlement agencies "can serve as bridges between the refugee and the new culture by providing information about cultural norms, community resources, and family practices" (p. 29). To prepare teachers, Faez and Valeo (2012) believed in raising awareness of the wider issues in the TESOL field so as to prepare novice teachers for what to expect in the classroom and in an education career path. The practicum course was found to be the most valuable for preparing instructors for the daily realities of teaching (Faez & Valeo, 2012). Fuchs and Akbar (2013) highlighted the need for language teachers to be trained to use technology in a pedagogically sound way. The authors noted that though many instructors were comfortable using technology such as Skype and YouTube at home, relatively few were using these or other tools in the classroom (Fuchs & Akbar, 2013). In the article, "Teacher Agency and Policy Response in the Adult ESL Literacy Classroom," Ollerhead (2010) explained the powerful and transformative effects of teacher agency, which can only be achieved when instructors feel confident and competent to teach and manage a

classroom. Educators reported increased student engagement and felt more personal satisfaction from work when exercising teacher agency (Ollerhead, 2010).

Having a basic understanding of how humans acquire and use language can be useful to teachers of adult English language learners (Florez & Burt, 2001). In "Beginning to Work with Adult English Language Learners: Some Considerations" Florez and Burt (2001) list some suggestions that instructors can use in the classroom regarding second language acquisition. Novice teachers should know that meaningful interaction and natural communication in the target language are necessary for successful language acquisition. Also, to become proficient, students need to use language as a tool to accomplish communication tasks. Additionally, learners can monitor speech for correctness when given time to focus on form. Florez and Burt (2001) went on to say that second language acquisition occurs when students are exposed to language that is at and slightly above their level of comprehension. Furthermore, new instructors should be aware that people have affective filters and thus should "create a classroom environment in which learners feel comfortable using and taking risks with English" (p. C-6). As well, there is a silent period during which learners are absorbing the new language prior to producing it. Finally, all language learners go through interlanguage periods during which students make systematic errors that are a natural part of the learning process (Florez & Burt, 2001).

The California Department of Education published standards for adult ESL programs (*Model Standards for Adult Education Programs: ESL*, 1992). These standards were written to provide guidelines for teaching English as a second language. The

publication stated that lessons should integrate the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The guidelines urged that classroom tasks should consist of meaningful interchanges and that instructional activities focus on communication skills necessary for students to function in real-life situations. Additionally, a variety of grouping strategies should be used to facilitate student-centered instruction, and activities should be varied in order to address different learning styles. Finally, lessons should integrate language and culture so that students learn about U.S. culture and the ways that American culture is both similar and different from students' native culture (*Model Standards for Adult Education Programs: ESL*, 1992).

Multiple training areas should be covered with novice ESL teachers including: second language acquisition, teaching English to adult learners, and how culture influences the classroom (Newman, Samimy, & Romstedt, 2010). "Basic Training and Research Connections for Novice ESL Teachers" (Henrichsen, 2010) and "Developing a Training Program for Secondary Teachers of English Language Learners in Ohio" (Newman, Samimy, & Romstedt, 2010) suggested the following topics be covered when preparing new instructors:

- Introduction: basic concepts
- Designing language-teaching programs, courses and lessons
- Developing fundamental teaching skills
- Basics of second language acquisition
- Knowing students: learner types, styles, and strategies
- Developing language skills

- Teaching English language components
- Making language teaching and learning enjoyable and memorable
- Testing English language skills
- Choosing, creating, and adapting language teaching materials

Covering these topics will equip beginner instructors with the knowledge they need to teach confidently. When teachers use these strategies and techniques, it will allow students to learn English in a more efficient and engaging way.

Part of engaging the students also relates to the personality traits of successful teachers, which include: flexibility and adaptability, enthusiasm, fairness, high expectations, a good sense of humor, patience, responsibility, agreeableness, a caring attitude, friendliness, honesty, and respectfulness (Al-Seghayer, 2017; Mullock, 2006). Mullock (2006) found that an important aspect of teaching English to culturally and linguistically diverse students is knowledge of the student's background and adapting a teaching style to fit student's specific needs. Experienced language teachers combine students' characteristics with knowledge of language management to tailor lesson plans to meet the goals set for the class.

Strategies and techniques.

The ESL New Teacher Resource Guide (Kearns & Knight-Mendelson, 2006) provided specific strategies that could be employed by novice instructors including a lesson plan template for adult learners and two specific models to accommodate a multi-level class. The lesson plan template detailed how to organize an adult ESL lesson into

the common lesson plan categories including objective, warm-up, introduction, presentation, practice, evaluation, and application. Kearns and Knight-Mendelson (2006) also discussed general strategies for managing a multi-level ESL class, and showed how to structure a lesson such that the class would start and end with all students together, but could break into small groups based on students' English proficiency for the middle portion of the lesson. The first multi-level model was created for a traditional classroom setting with conventional materials such as textbooks. The second multi-level model was written for a project based classroom where there could be several groups working simultaneously.

The Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center published *The ESOL Starter Kit* (2002) which included numerous techniques for individuals who have just started teaching adult language learners. When working with adults *The ESOL Starter Kit* (2002) recommended building on the experience and language of learners, using learners as a resource, sequencing activities from less to more challenging, and building redundancy into curriculum content by providing repetition of topics (p. C-12). One specific technique detailed in the guide was the language experience approach (LEA). The LEA was recommended to new teachers as "a way to introduce multiple activities that appeal to learners' diverse backgrounds and preferred learning styles while offering instruction in language that is both comprehensible and interesting" (p. C-13). An example given for a language experience approach lesson with adult learners was taking a field trip as a class and then using the trip as a stimulus for class discussion.

Selecting appropriate classroom materials was another strategy suggested for novice teachers to use when preparing a classroom space for adult language learners (*The ESOL Starter Kit*, 2002). Using concrete but age appropriate materials with adult learners improves instruction by providing a context for language and literacy growth. A partial list of suitable classroom materials from *The ESOL Starter Kit* (2002) included: realia, flash cards, pictures, music, an overhead projector, alphabet sets, games, index cards, chalk, paper, pens, scissors, and glue (p. C-14).

Gaps in the Literature

West and Williams (2015) examined the thirty-nine research studies published in the journal *Research in the Teaching of English* from 2009-2012 and found that only four studies looked at the teaching and learning of English among English language learners. None of those four studies were specific to adult learners. Few studies looked at how English is taught to adult refugees in resettlement agencies in the United States. Further research is needed to explore how resettlement agencies can best teach adult immigrants English in the short time period that they are allowed.

Chapter Three: Project Design

In this chapter I will explain the rationale behind creating an in-service training session for newly hired language teachers at resettlement agencies, who have little to no previous teaching experience. First, I will explain the needs of both beginner English language instructors and the newcomers seeking services from resettlement agencies. Second, I will make a case for why a workshop is the appropriate format for novice teachers. Third, I will explain how the workshop offers strategies and techniques to prepare educators to teach English in an efficient and engaging way while simultaneously giving adults agency over their own paths.

Teachers who are beginning to work with adult English language learners need training in several different areas (*ESOL Starter Kit*, 2002). Instructors should be taught how the principles of adult learning are filtered through culture, language, and experience (Florez & Burt, 2001). Florez and Burt (2001) also noted that having some understanding of how people acquire and use language is helpful background for teachers of adult English language learners. Educators should be aware that culture and language are closely related (Florez & Burt, 2001). New teachers similarly need to be introduced to a variety of instructional techniques, such as role playing, total physical response (TPR), and early production, and then decide which approaches will work best for their particular adult student population (Crandall & Peyton, 1993).

The California Department of Education (1992) published instructional standards that outline what adult newcomers need in order to learn English. *Model Standards for Adult Education Programs: ESL* (1992) noted:

- The four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) should be integrated into lesson plans to emphasize the holistic nature of language.
- The acquisition of communication skills that can be used in real-life situations is important for adult learners.
- Lessons that require students to be active participants and use critical thinking skills in order to solve problems they may encounter in their daily lives are equally important.
- Language tasks that consist of meaningful exchanges are necessary in order to increase communication skills (p. 5)

Additionally, language learners should be supported with lessons that use visuals to support instruction, model tasks, use scaffolding techniques, utilize authentic materials, balance variety and routines, and celebrate success (*ESOL Starter Kit*, 2002).

Given these demands, the implementation of introductory training for novice teachers hired to work with adult newcomers at resettlement agencies is important for both the teacher agency and for student success. The purpose of this training is to give teachers the tools they need to engage students in the learning process while being sensitive to their diverse backgrounds and setting up a classroom environment that lowers students' affective filters. The training covers a variety of topics, including understanding the adult ESOL learner, teaching effectively, English language acquisition, working with multicultural groups, and instructional approaches that support second language development in adults.

The final product of my project will be a half day in-service training workshop that includes a PowerPoint presentation, a paper handout, and group activities that encourage instructors to think critically about how to teach their culturally and linguistically diverse students. The purpose of this workshop is to give resettlement agency employees a foundation upon which to build their teaching skills. Additional resources are provided at the end of the session to encourage participants to continue their education.

The development of the content-based training will lead to all newly hired resettlement agency teachers starting with the same baseline of teaching awareness. It should enable adult refugees to gain more knowledge from their three month period as clients of the resettlement agency. The half-day format should also make the best use of time for employees who are dealing with time restraints such as AmeriCorps workers who are only placed in an agency for one year, or volunteers who can only give a few hours of their time each week.

Chapter Four: The Project

My final project is an in-service training session for newly hired language teachers at resettlement agencies who have little to no previous teaching experience. I have created the workshop in PowerPoint format and have interspersed questions and activities throughout the presentation to encourage active participation. The instructor should show the PowerPoint on a projector and each participant should also have a copy of the presentation in front of them. This training should serve as an introduction to teaching culturally and linguistically diverse adults. The topics covered include understanding adult language learners, strategies for managing a multi-level ESL class, adult learning in ESL contexts, second language acquisition, and more.

Understanding the Adult ESOL Learner

The first part of the workshop focuses on understanding adult language learners, whose objectives differ from those of traditional age students. After the introduction, the workshop facilitator is prompted to ask participants to name some ways they think students learn a second language. Examples include some common answers that the group may already know such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing, and also some that students may not have thought about, such as field trips, volunteering, and experiencing American culture. Next, some common characteristics of adult learners are discussed (Figure 4.1. See also Appendix A, Slide #6) to help participants begin to understand the mindsets of the adults they will be teaching.

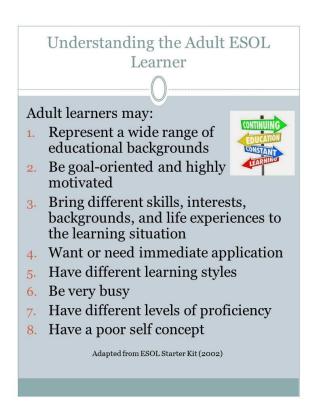


Figure 4.1 The Adult ESOL Learner

Three slides are dedicated to tips for success in the classroom. The first slide provides information on how to get to know your students and their backgrounds. Knowing students' biographies is crucial for teachers so that they can tailor lesson plans to fit students' needs and abilities (ESOL Starter Kit, 2002). Additionally, when students feel respected and valued their affective filters is lowered and they are able to focus on learning. The second slide focuses on planning lessons and activities for adults that have a purpose and also relate to students' real lives. Adults want transferable knowledge that will help them immediately, and they need to know why they are learning what they are learning (ESOL Starter Kit, 2002). The third slide gives more direct advice to teachers including giving students time to respond, modeling activities before asking the class to

try them, using pair or small group work, and varying activities to accommodate different learning styles.

Strategies for Managing a Multi-Level Adult ESL Class

The second section of the workshop discusses the reality that most resettlement agencies have to put all adult learners in the same class, regardless of comprehension level. This is important for new teachers to understand and tools are provided to help instructors plan lessons that support students at multiple comprehension levels. Novice teachers should be encouraged to plan for all groups to work on the same general topic, though each group may have a different lesson objective. Lessons should begin and end with the whole group together to create a sense of class community (ESOL Starter Kit, 2002). Also, a variety of different groupings (whole group, small group, pairs, individual) can be used to manage a multi-level class. Two models are provided in the Power Point presentation for teachers to use as guides when designing lessons for their adult classes (Figures 4.2 and 4.3. See also Appendix A, Slides #11 and #12).

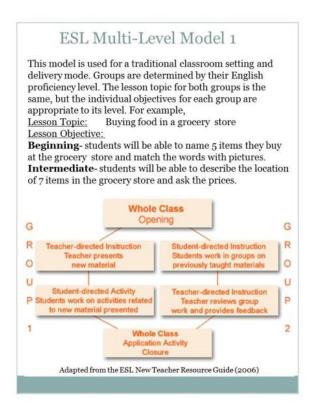


Figure 4.2 ESL Multi-Level Model 1

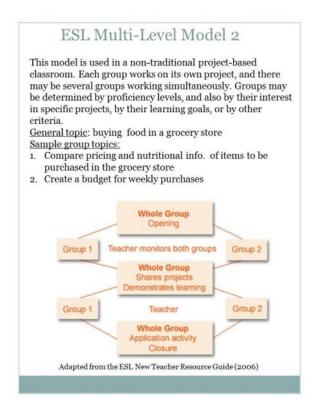


Figure 4.3 ESL Multi-Level Model 2

A traditional lesson plan template is provided for teachers and is filled in with suggestions tailored to creating an adult ESL lesson (Figure 4.4. See also Appendix A, Slide #13). After this lesson plan is reviewed, the instructor should ask participants to pair up and use the template to create a lesson plan for one of the cultural orientation topics that resettlement agencies have to cover with newcomers (Figure 4.5. See also Appendix A, Slide #14). This activity will give novice teachers experience creating a lesson plan that they can actually use in their work (Kearns & Knight-Mendelson, 2006).

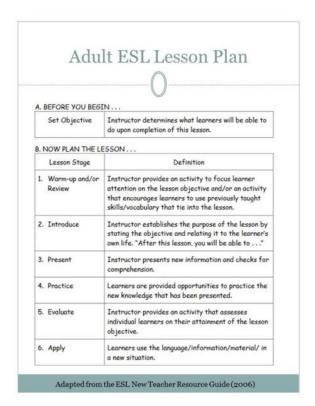


Figure 4.4 Adult ESL Lesson Plan



Figure 4.5 Adult ESL Lesson Plan Exercise

Adult Learning in ESL Contexts

The third part of the training reviews adult learning in ESL contexts. Beginning teachers should be aware that some nonnative learners may be hesitant to take charge of their own learning (ESL Starter Kit, 2002). Some adult learners are coming from a culture where the teacher is the expert and these students may therefore be resistant to a learner-centered classroom where they are expected to develop goals and work in groups. Alternately, some students may come from a culture where learning is considered to be a high-status, academic endeavor, and thus may feel that learning life skills is too basic (ESL Starter Kit, 2002). To overcome these objections, instructors should explain to learners why they are learning what they are learning in this new way.

Two slides cover instructional standards for adult ESL programs. These are important principles for novice ESL teachers to learn and incorporate into their lessons. Some of the instructional standards include: integrating the four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) into activities, focusing on acquisition of communication skills necessary for real-life situations, using a variety of grouping strategies to facilitate student-centered instruction, and developing the language necessary for students to access higher level thought processing (Model Standards for Adult Education Programs: ESL, 1992).

Resettlement agencies spend a lot of time teaching adult newcomers about culture in the United States. These organizations cover topics such as housing, health, safety, laws, transportation, education, your community, and cultural adjustment. It is therefore important for educators to think about American culture through the lens of adult immigrants. The last part of the adult learning in ESL contexts section asks workshop participants to think about how they would describe U.S. culture to a newcomer (Figure 4.6. See also Appendix A, Slide #18).

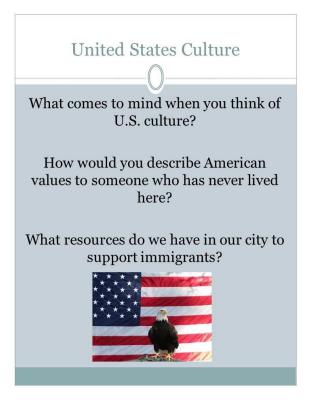


Figure 4.6 United States Culture

Second Language Acquisition

The fourth part of the training workshop covers second language acquisition (Figure 4.7. See also Appendix A, Slide #20). Instructors will have a much easier time teaching language learners if they understand some basic concepts about how people learn a second language. Topics in this section include: comprehensible input, affective filters, the silent period, interlanguage periods, and second language acquisition theories. Through this discussion, participants should come to realize that meaningful interaction and natural communication in the target language are necessary for successful language attainment.



Figure 4.7 Second Language Acquisition

One slide in this section introduces teachers to the idea that language and culture are closely related. Novice instructors should become acquainted with learners' cultures to better understand their perspectives and expectations both in and outside the classroom. However, new teachers are cautioned not to generalize or stereotype learners, and to respect cultural differences. Culture can play a role in all aspects of language, including response time (ESL Starter Kit, 2002).

The training includes several approaches that support second language development in adults. Some of these concepts are mentioned multiple times throughout the workshop, which is intentional so that participants have a better chance of remembering important points. Some of the approaches suggested to teachers in this

section are: get to know your students, use visuals to support your instruction, use scaffolding techniques to support tasks, balance variety and routine in your activities, and celebrate success.

Techniques for Working with Adults

The final section in the training workshop offers techniques for working with adults. This unit covers several different topics including: teaching low-level adult ESL learners, creating a lesson around the language experience approach, selecting appropriate classroom materials, and working with trauma survivors. Each of these subjects could be a section unto themselves, but in the interest of creating a workshop that could be delivered in a single day I did not delve as deeply into these areas.

The language experience approach (LEA) (Figure 4.8. See also Appendix A, Slide #26) is an ideal technique for teaching adult learners at a resettlement agency because it allows the class to turn a life skills field trip (such as taking the bus, going to the grocery store, or going to the post office) into lesson content. Four slides in the power point are dedicated to the language experience approach and the last slide asks participants to brainstorm some shared experiences that could be used as lessons for adult students.



Figure 4.8 Language Experience Approach

This section also contains three slides on selecting appropriate classroom materials (Figures 4.9 and 4.10. See also Appendix A, Slides #30 and #32). Using realia, other visual aids, music, and other supplies in the classroom is crucially important for language learners (ESL Starter Kit, 2002). The workshop is written such that at least 30 minutes should be spent discussing possible flash cards, pictures, music, games, pens, scissors, glue and other items that could be easily incorporated into teachers' lessons. The last slide asks participants to write a list of materials they might need to teach one of the cultural orientation topics that resettlement agencies cover. Even though this is only one small part of teaching language learners, it is an easy step that new instructors can incorporate into their teaching from the start.

Selecting Appropriate Classroom Materials

- Realia: clocks, food items, calendars, plastic fruits and vegetables, maps, household objects, real and play money, food containers, abacus, driving manual, and classroom objects
- Flash cards: pictures, words, and signs
- Pictures or photographs: personal, magazine, and others
- Music for imagery and relaxation
- Overhead projector, transparencies, and pens
- Pocket chart for numbers, letters, and pictures
- Alphabet sets
- Games such as bingo and concentration



Figure 4.9 Appropriate Classroom Materials



Figure 4.10 Classroom Material Exercise

Conclusion

The end of the training session gives participants an opportunity to ask questions and share concerns about teaching adult learners (Figure 4.11. See also Appendix A, Slide #34). The workshop covers many strategies and techniques in one day and therefore it is important to see what is on participants' minds at the end of the course. This training is meant to be a starting point for new teachers, not an exhaustive resource of everything there is to know about teaching adult language learners. The last slide in the power point presentation offers links to additional resources including new teacher resource guides, training videos, and a literacy resource collection.

What are your biggest takeaways from today? What concerns do you have about teaching adult learners? What topics would you like to discuss in future training workshops?

Figure 4.11 Wrap Up

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Doing the research for this project helped me understand more of what I saw during my student teaching at resettlement agency, Church World Service, in Greensboro, North Carolina. During my practicum course, I helped teach a series of cultural orientation classes for adult refugees who had recently arrived in the United States. These classes typically included eight to ten adults who spoke multiple different languages. Their backgrounds ranged from those that had been in professional careers in their home country, to those that had not been allowed to attend school and thus did not read or write in their first language. The classes were held in board rooms, not classrooms, and there were no instructional materials hung on the walls. The instructor had to set up her technology at the start of each class, and break it down and take it with her at the end of each lesson.

I have learned that the current United States immigration policy places a much greater emphasis on security than it does on integration. This is in contrast to some other first world countries such as Canada. The American immigration policies are also highly politicized which results in resettlement agencies being very limited in what resources they can offer and how long they can help newcomers. However, there are still improvements that resettlement agencies can make now, under the current policy, to help adults learn English more effectively. Resettlement agencies should provide their instructors basic strategies and techniques to teach adults English as a second language.

These agencies should also create dedicated space for instructors to create a classroom that is inviting and lowers learners' affective filters.

I hope that the project I created helps to raise awareness that ESL teachers serving adult students need specialized training. New instructors need to be educated on teaching a multi-level class, second language development in adults, adult learning in ESL contexts, and working with trauma survivors, among other topics. I hope that the workshop I have created will serve as a practical resource for new employees and volunteers who are preparing to teach adults at a resettlement agency. I would love to see it presented as introductory training for newly hired instructors.

Further work is needed in the area of teaching English to adult newcomers at resettlement agencies. On a micro level, resettlement agencies need to implement standard training for their language teachers and administer that training before instructors begin working with students. Agencies should also create dedicated classroom space that will be inviting for learners and lower the burden on teachers who constantly have to set up and break down their teaching materials. More research is also needed on how to best teach adult refugees English under the current immigration policies in the United States. It is obvious that refugees would benefit from more time and resources, but that should not stop resettlement agencies from making improvements now.

On a macro level, American immigration policies need to be reformed to place a higher priority on integration. If immigration became a bipartisan issue instead of a political bargaining chip, needed resources might flow more readily to resettlement agencies, thus benefitting adult immigrants and their families. America expects its

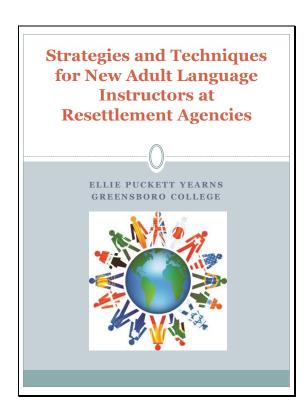
citizens to attend grade school for thirteen years, to say nothing of trade schools or higher education after that, but currently only funds three months of orientation for refugees who have been accepted into the country. After that time they are expected to get a job, support themselves, and repay the government loan they were granted upon arrival.

Much more can and should be done in ways both large and small to support the adult refugees who are immigrating into the United States. I hope that my teacher workshop might be one small resource to assist instructors at resettlement agencies who are doing the hard work of acclimating newcomers to the United States.

Appendix

Appendix A: Strategies and Techniques for New Adult Language Instructors at Resettlement Agencies

Slide 1



Welcome!

- Twenty-two million adults in the United States struggle with basic communication in English in the workplace, in their children's schools, and in their communities (Batalova & Fix, 2010)
- Immigrants and their children are one group for which limited English proficiency and literacy skills represent a significant barrier to mobility
- Instructors who rise to the challenge of teaching adults at resettlement agencies fill an important gap in our immigration system. Immigrants and refugees are some of the most vulnerable people in our community and they need our support (Henrichsen, 2010).



Slide 3

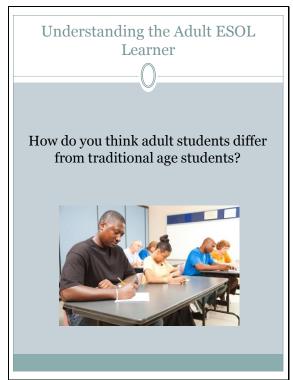
How Do Students Learn a Second Language?

Name some ways you think students learn a second language.





Slide 5



Understanding the Adult ESOL Learner

Adult learners may:

 Represent a wide range of educational backgrounds



- 2. Be goal-oriented and highly motivated
- 3. Bring different skills, interests, backgrounds, and life experiences to the learning situation
- 4. Want or need immediate application
- 5. Have different learning styles
- 6. Be very busy
- 7. Have different levels of proficiency
- 8. Have a poor self concept

Adapted from ESOL Starter Kit (2002)

Slide 7

Tips for Success in the Classroom



- Greet each student as he or she enters the classroom. Make use of name tags for students and for yourself.
- Provide a comfortable, safe, risk-free learning environment. Show you are interested in and care about your students.
- Find out about your students: what countries they come from, first language, years of schooling, if they are presently employed, ect.
- Find out students' ability in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. You can do this through conversation or simple activities.

Adapted from ESOL Starter Kit (2002) Hello my name is

Tips for Success in the Classroom

- Find out students' needs and wants, and plan your lessons accordingly.
- Take advantage of 'teachable moments,'
 for example, a concern addressed by a
 student, or a late-breaking news story.
 Teach to the students and talk about what
 needs to be discussed at the moment.
- Plan activities that have a real purpose.
 Let students know what they are going to be doing and why they are doing it.
- Make sure activities directly relate to students' lives. Students will not stay in class unless they can see a direct connection to their lives.

Adapted from ESOL Starter Kit (2002)

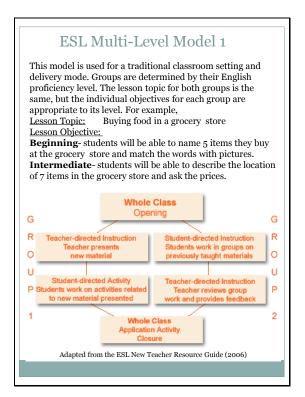
Slide 9

Tips for Success in the Classroom

- Vary activities to accommodate different learning styles (visual, aural, oral, kinesthetic), as well as different levels of student comprehension and ability.
- Simplify what you teach. Make sure your students understand one point before moving on to the next.
- Give students time to respond (pause time). It takes time to 'translate' from English to a native language and come up with a response in English.
- Always model an activity with another student before assigning it to the class.
- Try to use pair or small group work in every class.

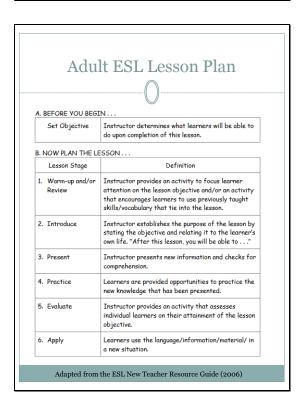
Strategies for Managing a Multi-Level ESL Class • First, administer Begin and end a needs your lesson with the whole group assessment to determine the together to create number and level a sense of class of groups you will community. need in your class • Use a variety of Plan for all groups teacher/student to work on the and same general student/student topic (each group groupings (whole may have a group, small different lesson group, pairs, objective) individual) Adapted from the ESL New Teacher Resource Guide (2006)

Slide 11



ESL Multi-Level Model 2 This model is used in a non-traditional project-based classroom. Each group works on its own project, and there may be several groups working simultaneously. Groups may be determined by proficiency levels, and also by their interest in specific projects, by their learning goals, or by other General topic: buying food in a grocery store Sample group topics: Compare pricing and nutritional info. of items to be purchased in the grocery store Create a budget for weekly purchases Whole Group Opening Teacher monitors both groups Group 2 Group 1 Shares projects Demonstrates learning Group 2 Group 1 Teacher Whole Group Application activity Adapted from the ESL New Teacher Resource Guide (2006)

Slide 13



Adult ESL Lesson Plan

Find a partner and take 30 minutes to create a lesson plan for one of our cultural orientation topics using the template from the previous slide.

Topics:

- 1. Your new community
- 2. Housing
- 3. Cultural adjustment
- 4. Health
- 5. Safety
- 6. U.S. laws
- 7. Transportation
- 8. U.S. education system



Slide 15

Adult Learning in ESL Contexts

- Some nonnative learners may be hesitant to take charge of their own learning;
- Their educational experiences in their countries may have taught them that the teacher is the unquestioned expert;
- They may be resistant to a learner-centered classroom where they are expected to develop goals and work in groups with other learners
- Students coming from cultures where learning is a high-status, academic endeavor, may resist life skill oriented instruction
- Teachers should explain to learners why they are learning what they are learning in this new way

Adapted from ESOL Starter Kit (2002)

Life Skills (1)

Instructional Standards for Adult ESL Programs

- Activities integrate the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) to emphasize the holistic nature of language
- Language tasks in the classroom consist of meaningful interchanges that enhance students' communicative competence
- Activities focus on acquisition of communication skills necessary for students to function in real-life situations
- A variety of grouping strategies are used in the classroom to facilitate studentcentered instruction



Adapted from Model Standards for Adult Education Programs: ESL (1992)

Slide 17

Instructional Standards for Adult ESL Programs

- Activities are varied in order to address different learning styles
- Activities integrate language and culture so that students learn about U.S. culture in ways significant and subtle that compare and contrast with those of their own culture
- Activities develop the language necessary for students to access higher level thought processes
- Activities require students to take active roles in the learning process, transferring critical thinking to real problem-solving situations in their everyday lives

Adapted from Model Standards for Adult Education Programs; ESL (1992)

United States Culture

What comes to mind when you think of U.S. culture?

How would you describe American values to someone who has never lived here?

What resources do we have in our city to support immigrants?



Slide 19

What Do Instructors Need to Know About Second Language Acquisition?

- Meaningful interaction and natural communication in the target language are necessary for successful language acquisition
- Effective language use involves an automatic processing of language
- Language learners can monitor their speech for correctness when they have time to focus their attention on form and know the language rules involved
- Second language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to language that is at and slightly above their level of comprehension (input +1)



What Do Instructors Need to Know About Second Language Acquisition?

- People have affective filters (created by a variety of factors such as motivation, selfconfidence, or anxiety) that can support or disrupt acquisition of a second language
- There are "interlanguage" periods during which learners make systematic errors that are a natural part of language learning
- There is a silent period during which learners are absorbing the new language prior to producing it
- Second language acquisition theories are based on research that investigates specific questions with specific populations in defined circumstances

Adapted from ESOL Starter Kit (2002)

Slide 21

Culture and Working with Multicultural Groups

- Culture and language are closely related
- Become acquainted with learners' cultures to better understand their perspectives and expectations both in and outside the classroom
- Avoid generalizing and stereotyping learners
- Acknowledge and respect differences

- Learners may not be willing or able to participate in activities that involve discussion of taboo subjects
- Offer learners options through which they can respond neutrally
- Culture can play a role in all facets of language, including response time

Thought Culture

Instructional Approaches that Support Second Language Development in Adults

- . Get to know your students and their needs
- 2. Use visuals to support your instruction
- 3. Model tasks before asking your learners to do them
- 4. Foster a safe classroom environment
- 5. Watch both your teacher talk and your writing
- 6. Use scaffolding techniques to support tasks
- 7. Bring authentic materials to the classroom
- 8. Don't overload learners
- 9. Balance variety and routine in your activities
- 10. Celebrate success

Adapted from ESOL Starter Kit (2002)

Slide 23

Teaching Low-Level Adult ESL Learners

There are several categories of adult ESL learners who can benefit from the approaches and techniques used in instruction for low-level learners:

- Learners who are non-literate and have had little or no prior schooling in their native language
- Leaners, such as speakers of Chinese, Arabic, or Khmer, who may not be familiar with the Roman alphabet
- 3. Learners who may have learning disabilities
- 4. Learners who are literate in their native language but who may want to participate in a slower-paced class

Techniques for Working with Adults

- Build on the experiences and language of learners. Invite them to discuss their experiences and provide activities that will allow them to generate language
- Use learners as a resource. Ask them to share their knowledge and expertise with others in the class.
- Sequence activities in an order that moves from less challenging to more challenging, such as progressing from listening to speaking, reading, and writing skills.
- Build redundancy into curriculum content, providing repetition of topics.



Adapted from ESOL Starter Kit (2002)

Slide 25

Techniques for Working with Adults

 Combine enabling skills (visual discrimination of letters and words, auditory discrimination of sounds and words, spacing between letters and words) with language experience and whole language approaches

Combine life-skill reading competencies with phonics, word recognition, word order, spacing words in a sentence, reading words in context, and reading comprehension.

- Use cooperative learning activities that encourage interaction by providing learners with situations in which they must negotiate language with partners to complete a task
- Include a variety of techniques to appeal to diverse learning styles.

An Integrated Approach to Literacy Instruction

The language experience approach (LEA)- which uses learner experiences as lesson content- is a way to introduce multiple activities that appeal to learners' diverse backgrounds and preferred learning styles while offering instruction in a language that is both comprehensible and interesting.



Adapted from ESOL Starter Kit (2002)

Slide 27

Example of a Modified LEA Lesson

- A shared experience, such as a field trip, a common situation, or a meaningful picture is a stimulus for class discussion.
- Learners volunteer sentences about the experience and the teacher writes the sentences on the chalkboard.
- 3. The teacher reads each sentence aloud, running her finger under words as each is pronounced, verifying that she has written what the student has said.
- 4. When the story is completed, the teacher reads it aloud.
- Learners are encouraged to join in a second and third reading of the story.
- 6. A number of activities can follow at this point: *continued on next slide*

Example of a Modified LEA Lesson

- A. Learners copy the story;
- B. Learners underline all the parts they can read;
- C. Learners circle specific words (e.g., words that begin with a designated sound, common sight words such as "the");
- D. Choral cloze: the teacher erases some words, reads the story, and asks learners to supply the missing words;
- E. Writing cloze: the teacher types the story, leaving out every fifth word.
 During the next class the teacher passes out the cloze and asks learners to fill in the missing words

Adapted from ESOL Starter Kit (2002)

Slide 29

Language Experience Approach

Together, let's brainstorm some shared experiences we could facilitate for your students, to then use in an LEA lesson.



Selecting Appropriate Classroom Materials

- Realia: clocks, food items, calendars, plastic fruits and vegetables, maps, household objects, real and play money, food containers, abacus, driving manual, and classroom objects
- Flash cards: pictures, words, and signs
- Pictures or photographs: personal, magazine, and others
- Music for imagery and relaxation
- Overhead projector, transparencies, and
- · Pocket chart for numbers, letters, and pictures
- Alphabet sets
- Games such as bingo and concentration







Adapted from ESOL Starter Kit (2002)

Slide 31

Selecting Appropriate Classroom Materials

- Colored index cards to teach word order in sentences, to show when speakers change in dialogue, to illustrate question/answer format, and to use as cues for a concentration game
- Colored chalk to teach word order, to differentiate between speakers in a dialogue, and to illustrate question and answer format
- Poster, butcher, and construction paper
- · Felt-tipped pens, colored pencils, and crayons
- Scissors, glue, and masking tape
- Children's literature for learning techniques for reading or telling stories to children

Adapted from ESOL Starter Kit

(2002)





Selecting Appropriate Classroom Materials

Take 10 minutes to write a list of materials you might need to teach one of the cultural orientation topics below:

Topics:

- 1. Your new community
- 2. Housing
- 3. Cultural adjustment
- 4. Health
- 5. Safety
- 6. U.S. laws
- 7. Transportation
- 8. U.S. education system





Slide 33

Working with Trauma Survivors

Unfortunately, some refugees in your classes have experienced trauma. To be sensitive to their needs:

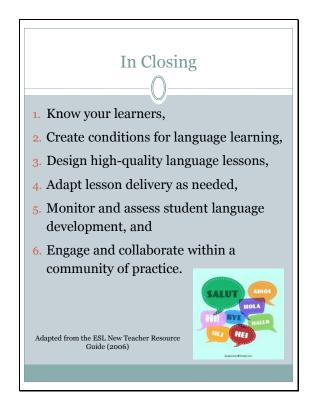
- Be mindful of the physical space within the classroom
- Rooms with few windows and tightly shut doors may make students feel a lack of control
- Consider leaving doors at least halfway open and point out the locations of bathrooms and exits before starting class
- Once students feel less vulnerable, teachers can focus on helping students to develop greater confidence in the classroom

Adapted from Overcoming Barriers: Adult Refugee Trauma Survivors in a Learning Community

Slide 34

Wrap up What are your biggest takeaways from today? What concerns do you have about teaching adult learners? What topics would you like to discuss in future training workshops?

Slide 35



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Department of Education

Slide 37

Additional Resources

- ESOL Starter Kit, Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center, October 2002 https://docplayer.net/8481545-Esolstarter-kit-virginia-adult-learningresource-center-october-2002.html
- Adult ESL Training Videos <u>https://www.newamericanhorizons.org/training-videos</u>
- LINCS Adult Education and Literacy Resource Collection https://lincs.ed.gov/resourcecollection?keys=&field_topic_target_id% 5B7533%5D=7533
- ESL New Teacher Resource Guide https://www.rongchang.com/pdf/newinstructorcalpro.pdf

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